Work-Related Perceptions and Suicide

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Negative work-related perceptions can increase depression and suicidal ideation among employees, indirectly contributing to their risk for suicide attempts. This finding underscores the importance of providing managers and employees with strategies for constructing a healthier organizational climate to promote greater work satisfaction.

Researchers used data from a nationally representative U.S. sample of 2,855 participants to examine their perceptions of the following work-related characteristics:

1. Motivational work characteristics, including job autonomy (i.e., freedom to make important decisions at work) and task variety (i.e., amount of time spent doing the same thing repeatedly)
2. Amount of time spent doing hard physical labor
3. Satisfaction with higher-order work needs (i.e., belief that their job fits with their long-term career goals)
4. Work-family conflict (i.e., how often they have spent less time with family due to work responsibilities)
5. Family-work conflict (i.e., the extent to which family responsibilities have interfered with work)
6. Job satisfaction

The analysis controlled for demographic characteristics and history of depression and suicidal behaviors. It found that motivational work characteristics, work-family and family-work conflict, and job satisfaction were all directly associated with depression and suicidal ideation, with an indirect connection to suicide attempts. Although few employees will attempt suicide, this research has implications for creating supportive workplace policies as part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention.


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